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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Identical letters dated 9 March 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to draw your attention once again to the dangerous conduct of the armed terrorist groups, which are being supported by certain States, that are operating in the area of separation in the Syrian Golan. Their activities, on the one hand, seriously threaten the ability of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to carry out its mandate and, on the other hand, endanger the lives of UNDOF personnel, as well as the lives of the Syrian civilians residing in that area who are being used as human shields.

Those armed terrorist groups have taken advantage of Syria's adherence to the 1974 Agreement on the Disengagement of forces, particularly the fact that Syrian troops are neither present in nor enter into the restricted area. They have also benefited from logistical support provided by the Israeli occupation forces, which most recently, in mid-February 2013, transported seven injured terrorists across the line of separation to an Israeli hospital, and then brought them back across that same line into Syrian territory. In that connection, we should like to recall that, according to a report published in the 17 February 2013 edition of the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, the Israeli occupation army officially announced that it had provided emergency medical care to seven Syrian civilians who had been injured near the Golan defence perimeter, and that the injured had then been taken to the government-operated hospital in Safed for further treatment. Moshe Ya'alon, the Vice-Prime Minister of Israel, confirmed that information in a television interview.

The provision of assistance by the Israeli occupation forces to the terrorists in the area of separation is a flagrant violation of the Agreement on the Disengagement of forces and the mandate of UNDOF. It also places the lives of UNDOF personnel in danger. This is precisely what happened on 6 March 2013, when a terrorist group calling itself The Yarmuk Martyrs abducted 21 Filipino peacekeepers attached to the Force.

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What is striking is that the United Nations, in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, disregarded all of the information that the Syrian Government quickly provided in a series of official letters and in bilateral meetings with United Nations officials, in particular Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and his senior staff, regarding the threat posed by the presence of those groups in the area of separation and their attacks against the civilian population and United Nations forces operating in Syria. That disregard has indirectly sent a misleading message to those groups that they will not be held accountable or sanctioned for their actions, and it even might have led them to believe that United Nations Secretariat officials are sympathetic to their actions. Such a belief could have encouraged them to go so far as to abduct 21 peacekeepers and put their lives in danger by using them as hostages to be bargained and a means of applying political pressure on the Syrian Government.

Following is a list of attacks carried out by the terrorist groups against peacekeeping forces operating in Syria. Although this list was officially transmitted to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department has not made any firm response to the actions of those groups:

1. On 29 November 2012, four UNDOF troops were injured near Damascus International Airport in attacks carried out by armed groups against a motorcade belonging to the Force.

2. At the beginning of February 2013, an UNDOF patrol was fired on by armed groups in the area of separation.

3. On 11 February 2013, armed persons stole a car belonging to the command of United Nations forces in Syria. They also maltreated two members of those forces by compelling them to get out of the car at gunpoint.

While the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again commends UNDOF and reiterates its full support for the Force and the important role that it plays, it also the emphasizes that the United Nations must play its role and fulfil its responsibilities in an objective and impartial manner by identifying and condemning unequivocally the parties that are jeopardizing the 1974 Agreement on the Disengagement of forces, endangering the lives of peacekeepers and civilian in the area of separation and threatening the stability of the entire region. Those parties are the Israeli occupation forces, which, as we stated earlier, are assisting the terrorists in the area of separation, and the armed terrorist groups, which are present throughout that area and have attacked its residents as well as peacekeepers. In that connection, we emphasize that the outside parties that are supporting those terrorist groups must bear full responsibility for those groups' actions, including the abduction of the UNDOF peacekeepers.

I should be grateful if the contents of this letter could be included in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF. I should also be grateful if this letter could be issued as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 54, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative of the Syrian
Arab Republic to the United Nations